

GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE

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Having written the article on CIA, I enjoyed your letter for two reasons: (a) it proves we're being read, and (b) it apparently ruffled your feathers, which is what we're in business to accomplish.

Before addressing the many valid points you raised, let me hop to the last one you mentioned. You hit the nail right on the head! The author is one of the angry ex-staffers with the "in-depth knowledge and virtually unassailable judgment" described in the article. He is by no means embarrassed to use such high-sounding descriptives of himself either. (Read his two books on Vietnam mentioned in the Publisher's Note of the September issue of GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE to test his judgment.)

It was utter frustration over the "management" of intelligence dealing with Vietnam that finally prompted him to leave the intelligence profession, taking, by the way, a 25 percent cut in pay to do so. When vested interests of State and Defense, the reputations of high officials, and the Rostow interpretation of reality became preeminent in every intelligence estimate written on Vietnam, rather than an objective analysis of the situation, it was evident to the author that something was wrong with our so-called intelligence community.

The author does not believe that he has done CIA an injustice. He believes that CIA has done the U.S. Government an injustice by plodding along in a "don't-make-waves," bureaucratic manner that almost defies comprehension.

Have you stopped to consider that there has been a rash of intelligence goofs in recent years, such as the "Liberty" (Arab-Israeli flap June '67), the Pueblo, and the EC-121 shootdown off the North Korean coast? If you were familiar with the inner workings of the intelligence community, you'd be aware of the fact that they were caused largely by the bureaucratic inertia of a sprawling intelligence community that has diffused responsibility and dehumanized the decision-making process to the point where it is not only failing to live up to its responsibilities to support the President but, moreover, is taking us onto a collision course with national crisis again and again.

To underscore the prevalent attitude among the management hierarchy at CIA it might interest you to know that at this moment the Inspector General of CIA is conducting a heated search for our sources. Don't you think it would be more productive for them to consider dealing with some of the problems raised in the article?

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Before continuing, let me raise a point which nags me about your letter. Having spent over 12 years in intelligence I am cynical enough to suspect your motives. It would not be too surprising to me if your letter was written as a put-on to have me reveal the sources to whom I spoke at CIA. It wouldn't be the first such act on CIA's part, and if it is, I applaud them for their slick use of "trade-craft," which they so carefully taught me.

OK, to your other points:

(1) "classic battle" vs. Nixon: You got me! It is inconsistent and I apologize for failing to provide a follow-up explanation in the story. I did mean it; however, because Nixon has raised the committee approach to policy-making to an all time high and with it has come, in the intelligence community at least, a "least common denominator" approach that has frosted most of the working level analysts.

(2) "size of the cross-section": You zapped me again and I compliment you for your perception. The population sample was representative of the people at CIA in their production department which totals about [ ] souls (to use a missionary phrase). I talked to more than a dozen at the first two levels in the hierarchy--the analysts and the branch chiefs. Moreover, they were from all four of the functional offices in the production shop.

(3) "the expert's opinion": You are on thin ice with this one. Logic and common sense would seem to dictate that the expert's opinions would prevail or hold sway no matter what the working environment. It simply doesn't work that way, my friend! That's my hang-up! I have seen generals, admirals, and GS-18s override the experts and rewrite or soften intelligence judgments simply because they would make someone like General Westmoreland look bad if presented as the experts had drafted them.

I admit there is a certain residue of sour grapes in my attitude about CIA as you mentioned. It exists because human lives have been wasted, not only in Vietnam but elsewhere, because CIA has failed to come to grips with its awesome responsibilities. It has chosen the path of least resistance in every crunch and has opted in its official intelligence judgments to go with the conventional view. National intelligence requires objective, gutsy leadership, leadership that will go against the mainstream on occasions, and have the intestinal fortitude to tell it like it is, not like people like to hear it. Until we have such leadership, I will retain my sour grapes attitude on CIA and will continue writing articles that, hopefully, will be instrumental in bringing about the needed changes.

Not preferring to terminate our postal relationship with extreme prejudice, I'll close by saying in all honesty that I enjoyed your letter a great deal, that I believe you raised some very valid points, and that your incisive comments have served to sharpen my approach to writing. Follow-on articles on CIA (and there will be many) will be influenced by your well-reasoned letter.

Sincerely,

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